THE WRITINGS

BOOK I

On ALETHEA

I. DIVINE ORDER

There are those who would claim that the Gods are but the delusions of men who had not yet learned to measure the firmament, that what the fathers called order was but a shadow cast upon the children's hearts by their fathers' fears, that order itself was invented that men's necks might bear its yoke.

This is a sentiment all too common, and one all too proudly expressed, and too often mistaken for Truth by those who would most quickly dismiss it; for Truth may always be found in the pride of others. Let us then examine this belief with all due haste lest in our haste to scorn it we find ourselves accused of believing it.

Do they not see the order in the turning of the seasons, that the wheat be not reaped before its time and the grape not gathered when it is unripe? Do they not see the order in the wandering hosts that pass above and ever come to that place prepared for them, and in their own soul the breath that stirs them not of their choosing and stirs not at their sleeping and unknowing? Was there not order even before men learned to walk the earth and shall there not be order long after all men are dust? This is surely the surest proof that order was not the work of men nor even their fathers, but the work of something greater whose image even the humblest among us bear.

It was this thought that prompted Plato in the *Timaeus* to declare that the Artisan of this ordered cosmos had indeed looked beyond the realm of temporal becoming unto the world of eternal Forms and so had built this temple to them, and it is not as mere poet that he speaks this but revealer, for he had received this message in the Pythagorean tradition before him and before all the holy Mysteries had ever been woven into the very fabric of the Gods. He did not stand as rival to those who had come before in the temple and sung the praises of the Lord but as their disciple did he receive this Revelation and so give it in his turn, for he alone did not fashion it and so he alone did not mar it but proved his life a living out of the wisdom and order that had shaped his every step, and so he showed his readers the way as he had been shown it.

Thus did the Hellenic Fathers not stand in contradiction to the sacred bards and prophets who had come before but alongside them bear the same light from across the dark sea, for they had not received this wisdom as their own alone but brought it as the Revelation for all who would come after.

Thus too do we speak of many Gods, for if men see but one truth should they not rightly name but One? Let them who ask this consider the sun in his glory and what he makes of the things below that he touches and what he leaves untouched to be trodden underfoot, and whether the sea may rightly be called many waters because of the waves that lift it ever upwards and the depths that drag it ever downwards. Iamblichus and his successor Proclus declared that within the Gods there is a deeper unity than even in man and so that they and their Father beyond are not the Many opposed to the One but the Many flowing from and to the One. Thus are we

commanded to revere Zeus and Athena, Apollo and Artemis not to cleave Truth to fragments but to worship Truth in the many forms He makes known to us, as we might revere the Sun in all His aspects and at all hours of the day and not divide Him into sundry powers nor sundry Gods. Thus then let those who would understand the Gods consider these things that we say and that they are not spirits beyond the ken of men but the Powers by which the cosmos is ordered and through which it is known to all who would know it.

II. REVELATION

They say also that Revelation cannot be certain because it had not come in one voice nor one verse but in many poets and prophets and that across the centuries, and that not all had sung of Zeus nor all had spoken of Orpheus and yet even as they say this, they stumble at the holiest of names, for even the loftiest revelations had first been granted in the oldest days to mortals not in one verse but in many.

Hesiod tells us that he had not sung this song himself but that he had known the Muses upon Helicon who had breathed this knowledge into him and given him voice to declare those things both past, present, and not yet to be unveiled. Homer calls upon the Muse before he sings of those things none had taught him and none could ever unteach, for he knew, as all who served the Muses knew, that his voice was but one among those who spoke of the same great truths to different men in different ways. Thus are the Muses many and yet one, as one spring may take many forms in many veins of rock and so be known in many voices but heard as always one.

Thus then do we find in the Homeric and Hesiodic lays no variance in the holiest parts, but that concerning the Gods and concerning the cosmos and concerning the life beyond all men are wholly agreed. Where then are these contradictions that men so oft and readily find? As the saying goeth:

> *“They are as the travelers who had climbed the same great peak by different trails and so in their stories made known not the peak but the valleys and the rivers and the various turns of the road.”*

Plutarch who had served most faithfully at Delphi and so knew concerning revelations and concerning the variations thereof in different ages might well declare that the oracles did not always utter in the same manner what had always been decreed, for the vessel was not always the same, and yet the wine remained unchanged and so let no man declare that the Revelation was changed because the vessel had been changed. The channel may run in different beds but the spring never faileth those who know how to find it.

The Muses had given the first great Revelation and what had followed after was not to gainsay but rather to supplement it, for the Sacred Continuation, too, kept still the holy deposit that had been entrusted to it. The Oracles of Apollo keep what concerneth this life and the dangers that attend it while the rites of Eleusis which Eumolpus and Triptolemus keep in their keeping tell what concerneth this life beyond. There is no wonder then that those who walked Eleusis' sacred streets had ever stood so very fearless before the prospect of death, seeing as they did the other shore most clearly and yet no farther than that. The laws of Lycurgus and of Zaleucus tell us concerning those things that concerneth order in the city, for divine order is not confined to matters within the soul but extendeth even to those without and so to the organization most necessary of all, which is the city. Thus is the LOGOS not a single verse nor even a single book but a company of witnesses

which speaketh always most truly of the parts, and the wisest of men will find no one verse that speaketh of all things, nor one man who speaketh as all have spoken, but rather a company of voices that speak most truly of the whole.

III. SOUL AND LIFE

And so they cry again that if the Gods be just, why is it that this life falleth so oft into toil and forgetfulness, that even as men are made to live beyond this body they should be made, even in this life, to toil most sorely and to beget most bitterly? Would a just order not grant men more ease in this life if such an one should rightly strive to attain it? This question, asked in all tongues and all times, may perhaps be the first that any man ever thinketh, and so let us not scorn it or mistake it for blasphemy but consider it most earnestly.

Plato writ in the *Phaedrus* of the charioteer who had once been winged and who had ridden the skies among the Gods and who had seen those holy sights and who had fallen with his horses to the ground and so forgotten all in the folly of his passion. This is no light tale but one writ most likely for his contemporaries and us who live in this endless night for even as he had seen those things most holy and most fair, even so long doth the soul in man feel most deeply this wistfulness, this homesickness for the land and light from which it came. The toil of this life is no punishment, nor is it a fiction invented to hide some deeper truth, for it is the lot of the soul that falleth not from the eternal order but from forgetfulness. To remember is the lot of this life, and to feel this most bitter longing after something for which we can find no name is to find the truest definition of the human soul, and it is this soul alone that crieth out for justice and for the order from which it falleth.

But how shall the soul return if not by toil and by the bitterness of this lot? Shall it not find in ease and comfort the means to return to remembrance, seeing as it doth that such things shall profit it nothing? No, for even as Porphyry writtest concerning abstinence and Plotinus concerning the flight of the soul, they did both declare that virtue and purity and the turning away from the body was the path most fitted for this return. Thus doth moderation temper the passions, and thus doth courage keep the soul from folly and fear and so from returning that same folly and fear from whence it came, and so with justice doth the soul temper its dealings with other souls that ride this road of life with it, and piety keep it always turned towards the Gods rather than itself alone. And thus doth knowledge most profit it in this life to aid in this remembrance, for even as a man may feel the name almost upon his tongue and yet not know it, so doth this knowledge return to the soul bit by bit and remind it gradually of the things it had almost forgotten until it findeth suddenly the name as a whole and known and so remembereth all.

Do they not see that the surgeon who cuteth into the flesh and so maketh known the wound doth so not in cruelty but in love? Therefore let them who blame this life for its hardships know that this order is no invention of men nor even of their fathers, but that it hath been given to them from above and that the soul which walketh in darkness shall find its way back to the light if only it would take up this toil and this pain and this knowledge and this Virtue. Therefore let them who would seek the Light know that this life is no prison without purpose and no garden without toil but a road, and the soul that taketh it rightly may return to that Light from which it came and the soul that taketh it wrongly may wander on and on forgetting still. Therefore did ALETHEA not

promise the ease of the body and the comfort of the senses for all who would enter into it, but most surely it did promise them that it did find a road home.